

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 06502

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CSCE, SHUM, UR, AU
SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN REACTION TO U.S. APPROACH ON SOVIET
TRIALS

REF: STATE 179532

1. ACTING DCM REVIEWED ON JULY 18 WITH MFA SECRETARY
GENERAL AMBASSADOR REITBAUER POINTS CONTAINED PARA 4 REF-
TEL. REITBAUER RESPONDED WITH BRIEF SUMMARY OF GOA'S
GENERAL POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ITS SPECIFIC ATTITUDE
ON CURRENT SOVIET TRIALS AS FOLLOWS.

2. AUSTRIA'S APPROACH ON HUMAN RIGHTS, BASED ON REALITIES
OF ITS GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION, DIFFERS SOMEWHAT FROM THAT
OF U.S. KREISKY GOVERNMENT HAS DEVELOPED WHAT IT CONSIDERS
SUCCESSFUL APPROACH TO RESOLUTION OF SPECIFIC HUMANITARIAN
CASES, NAMELY, QUIET, BEHIND-THE-SCENES DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY
WITH BOTH COMMUNIST AND NONCOMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS. IN SOME
CASES SUCCESSFUL INTERCESSION HAS TAKEN FORM OF LETTER
FROM CHANCELLOR TO HEAD OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT REQUESTING
SYMPATHETIC REVIEW OF CASE AND OFFERING AUSTRIA AS COUNTRY
OF REFUGE OR EXILE. AT SAME TIME AUSTRIA'S NONGOVERNMENTAL
BODIES AND MEDIA HAVE BEEN PUBLICLY HIGHLY CRITICAL OF
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VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ALL PARTS OF WORLD AND
CHANCELLOR AND FOREIGN MINISTER HAVE VOICED THEIR DISDAIN
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS RESTRICTIONS ON APPROPRIATE OCCASIONS.

3. CONCERNING SPECIFIC CURRENT SOVIET TRIALS, REITBAUER
SAID THAT KREISKY HAD SENT MUCH EARLIER PERSONAL LETTER
TO KOSYGIN ON SHCHARANSKIY AND ORLOV CASES AND WOULD

PROBABLY DO SO AGAIN IN ACCORD WITH AUSTRIA'S LONG-ESTABLISHED, LOW-KEY, BEHIND-SCENES APPROACH ON HUMAN RIGHTS. ALONG WITH THIS APPROACH, AUSTRIAN NONGOVERNMENTAL BODIES (E.G. POLITICAL PARTIES, YOUTH AND TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS AND MEDIA) HAVE ALREADY PUBLICLY PROTESTED SOVIET TRIALS BY DISPATCHING TELEGRAMS AND RESOLUTIONS TO MOSCOW. AUSTRIA STANDS WITH FREE SOCIETIES IN OPPOSITION TO VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS BUT AS NEUTRAL (IN EXPOSED POLITICAL MILITARY POSITION) IT FEELS ITS APPROACH TO DEALING WITH ISSUE HAS SERVED BEST BOTH ITS OWN INTERESTS AND THOSE OF GREATER MANKIND. REITBAUER DECLINED TO OFFER ANY SUGGESTIONS AS TO WHAT FURTHER ACTIONS COULD BE TAKEN BY CSCE STATES ON SUBJECT, NOTING AUSTRIA'S ASSOCIATION WITH NEUTRAL AND NONALIGNED GROUP IN CSCE.

4. COMMENT. ONE OF AUSTRIA'S MAJOR WORKING PRINCIPLES OF FOREIGN POLICY IS ITS CONCERN FOR AND SPECIAL ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS, ONE ASPECT OF WHICH IS HUMAN RIGHTS. AUSTRIA MAINTAINS A LIBERAL ASYLUM POLICY AND HAS BECOME SINCE 1956 FIRST COUNTRY OF REFUGE FOR LARGE NUMBERS OF ESCAPEES AND REFUGEES FROM COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. AUSTRIA ALSO SERVES AS FIRST COUNTRY OF TRANSIT FOR THOUSANDS OF JEWISH EMIGRES, LARGELY FROM SOVIET UNION BUT ALSO FROM EE COUNTRIES. AUSTRIAN OFFICIAL QUARTERS FEEL THAT AUSTRIAN PUBLIC OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORTS PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS EVERYWHERE IN WORLD BUT THAT PUBLIC GOVERN-
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MENTAL CONFRONTATION WITH SOVIETS AND COMMUNIST EE GOVERNMENTS OVER ISSUE WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AND COULD ENDANGER AUSTRIA'S USE AS COUNTRY OF TRANSIT OR ASYLUM FOR REFUGEES AND EMIGRES FROM EASTERN EUROPE AND SOVIET UNION.
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